

# VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF CONNECTICUT



## STATE LEGISLATIVE OFFICE

### STATEMENT OF

ROBERT A. HUNTER  
STATE LEGISLATIVE CHAIRMAN  
VETERANS OF FOREIGN WARS OF THE UNITED STATES

BEFORE THE  
SELECT COMMITTEE ON VETERANS' AFFAIRS  
THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT

WITH RESPECT TO PENDING VETERAN-RELATED LEGISLATION  
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2012  
HARTFORD, CT

Senate Chairman Leone, House Chairman Hennessey, and members of the Select Committee on Veterans Affairs:

On behalf of the roughly 20,000 men and women of the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. (VFW) and our Auxiliaries I would like to thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. Our members greatly appreciate the voice you give them at these hearings that are critical to their well-being as veterans and citizens of the great State of Connecticut.

1. S.B. No. 113 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING SERVICE MEMBERS CIVIL RELIEF ACT PROCEEDINGS.

The VFW supports this bill. We believe providing the opportunity for testimony through some electronic means while deployed, and not able to be physically present during court proceedings, affords that service member a reasonable means of meeting his or her civil obligation(s).

2. S.B. No. 114 (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING PRETRIAL DIVISIONARY PROGRAMS.

The VFW supports this bill. With the consideration that our state has seen more than 16,500 residents deployed to combat since 2001, and roughly 25% of them can be expected to suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress (PTS), an opportunity to help those

who have seen no other course of treatment but to self-medicate is presented in the bill. The low-level offenses that can be expected as by-products of PTS are most easily addressed through treatment, and this proposed legislation offers a vehicle to make that a reality for our veterans who need more help than they are willing to seek for themselves.

It should be noted the cost of a diversionary program per capita is approximately one-third of the cost of incarceration. Treatment for our veterans as the need arises will help them re-enter civilian life as capable, productive citizens. This is a win for the state, a win for our fellow citizens, and most assuredly a win for our returning veterans.

3. [S.B. No. 198](#) (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING DESECRATION OF WAR OR VETERANS' MEMORIALS.

The VFW supports this bill, and believes ensuring the integrity of our state's memorials serves its citizens the reminder of the costs of war, and pays honor in perpetuity to those who gave their last measure of devotion to their country in its service.

4. [S.B. No. 250](#) (RAISED) AN ACT EXCLUDING VETERANS' DISABILITY COMPENSATION FROM PROPERTY ASSIGNMENT AND ALIMONY IN DISSOLUTION OF MARRIAGE PROCEEDINGS.

The VFW supports this bill, as it protects the disabled veteran by ensuring a continued, undiminished stream of compensation for losses accrued during their service to the United States. Such compensation may well be the normalizing factor in allowing the veteran to sustain a viable life following the dissolution of marriage proceedings.

5. [S.B. No. 251](#) (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING VETERANS' JOBS.

The VFW supports this bill, as it will directly address the disparity in the veterans' unemployment rate of 11.7% and the overall rate of 9.1% by providing greater opportunities to both veterans and the companies that would hire them.

6. [H.B. No. 5296](#) (RAISED) AN ACT CONCERNING COURSE ENROLLMENT FEE WAIVERS FOR CERTAIN VETERANS AND MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL GUARD ENROLLED AT CHARTER OAK STATE COLLEGE.

The VFW is in favor of this legislation. Returning veterans, regardless of their duty stations, return to civilian life with experiences and a self-discipline not commonly enjoyed by their civilian counterparts. Creating greater opportunity for, and easing the costs of higher education to our war veterans brings back to our state an energized veteran workforce capable of putting their experience and education to work.

7. [H.B. No. 5297](#) (RAISED) AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO STUDY THE SUBSTITUTION OF STATE LICENSING REQUIREMENTS WITH MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTY TRAINING FOR VETERANS.



The VFW supports this bill, the passage of which will ultimately afford those who practiced an MOS or rating in military service a direct route to securing a comparable civilian license.

The VFW believes the task force, if constituted, will find military training and execution exceeds the requirements of their civilian counterparts, and oftentimes in more severe situations. For example, it makes sense that a service member who operates heavy equipment as a routine part of their MOS should be able to secure a CDL with little effort and no re-schooling. A helmsman who has piloted an aircraft carrier or destroyer should have little difficulty in securing a commercial boating license.

Moreover, creating an expedient path to licensure for returning veterans will directly address the disparity in the veterans' unemployment rate of 11.7% and the overall rate of 9.1%.

8. H.B. No. 5298 (RAISED) AN ACT ESTABLISHING A LIST OF PREFERRED VETERANS' CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS.

The VFW heartily supports this bill, as it has been a great source of frustration for not only our organization, but for all veterans advocacy groups who do honorable work on behalf of and for their brethren. Not only do such groups yield funds when honorable groups would do the same, they create and foster an air of distrust among the citizens in the communities where they operate. Organizations which seek to deceive our state's citizens by preying on their veteran-friendly charitable nature are an obscenity that should not go unattended.

Below is a link to a NY Fox news story that exposed one of these groups::

<http://www.myfoxny.com/dpp/news/shame/veterans-support-organization-20110203>

~~9. H.B. No. 5299 (RAISED) AN ACT ESTABLISHING A COMMENDATION MEDAL, AN ACHIEVEMENT MEDAL AND THE ORDER OF PRECEDENCE FOR STATE MILITARY DECORATIONS AND AWARDS.~~